

## Philippians 1:27-30 - What Would Be Heard of Us?

**Introduction:** For the offices of Teaching and Ruling elder and for deacon, both need to have good “reputations.” In fact, **1 Tim. 3:7** “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” It also says in the Proverbs: **Proverbs 27:2** “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.” **Proverbs 27:21** “...And a man is valued by what others say of him.”

**We tend to think of ourselves in the best possible light** - we will usually emphasize the positives about ourselves - and we will usually give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. But the people we live with, work with, and go to church with are much more likely to speak more transparently about us.

**It is the same with churches.** In his travels, Paul would “hear” how churches are fairing. Consider these passages:

**1 Cor. 11:18** For first of all, when you come together as a church, I **hear** that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

**2 Thes. 3:11** For **we hear** that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

**In Philippians 1:27-30** we are given instructions regarding what Paul desired to “hear” about the church in Philippi. There are 3 things - *Paul desired to “hear” that the Philippians were:*

### 1. United in Striving for the Gospel - v27

**[27] Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,**

**Point:** What is that brings about true unity. Over the past century, many have taken the stance, “Doctrine divides, experience unites,” or “Doctrine divides, service unites,” or “Doctrine divides, social causes unite.”

**Point 2:** Notice the phrase at the end of the verse: “... with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...”

**Application:** There is always a need to “strive together” for the faith of the gospel.

**Question:** What is meant by “the faith of the gospel” in this verse?

**Answer:** “the faith” is the doctrine or teachings of Christ and the apostles and prophets. It is all of the teachings of the Bible. The great Biblical truths concerning:

1. That there is one and only one true and living God.
2. That this one God exists eternally as three divine persons - Father, Son, & Holy Spirit
3. That man is created and was made in the image and likeness of God - and therefore, all human life is sacred and precious.
4. That mankind fell into sin and is now inclined toward moral evil and spiritual falsehood.
5. That the Bible is the only source of special / saving revelation that God has made to man in order that he might be redeemed from his sins and reestablish communion with God.
6. That Jesus Christ, God’s Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, added a full human nature to Himself at the incarnation in the womb of the virgin Mary and was born of her, yet without sin.
7. That Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, and the third day rose from the dead *bodily*.

8. That Jesus' death upon the cross was a substitutionary, legal, justice-satisfying death made in behalf of His elect people.
9. That God commands people to repent and trust in Christ alone for their salvation - without relying upon their works in any way, shape, or form.
10. That God's law is abiding and valid today and ought to be followed by all men everywhere.

**There is obviously much more... but these things are "the faith of the gospel."**

**Question:** What does the text mean by "strive together?" Why do we need to be "striving" for the faith of the gospel?

**Answer:** The strange phenomenon of "the drift" - the Christian church as a whole always seems to very gradually "drift" away from Scripture, away from sound doctrine, away from truth towards apostasy.

**Application:** Therefore, as a point of important application, there will always be a need to preach, teach, explain, write about, and defend the truths God has revealed to us.

**Illustrations:** The apostles in the NT documents themselves exhorted and commanded all Christians to be witnesses for the gospel and defenders of the gospel:

**1 Peter 3:15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always **be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you** a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

**Jude 1:3** Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend earnestly** for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

**The Great Emphasis in v27 and in all this:** The Evangelistic component of the Christian life and of the Christian church's life. There is a sense in which our whole existence upon the earth is intended to disseminate the doctrines and righteousness of Christ to the lost and dying world around us. Sometimes there is fierce and direct opposition, other times there is great indifference to the things of God, other times there is great confusion about the things of God because of heresy from within the church - but at all times, we must, as Philippians 1:27 commands us to "with one mind strive together for the faith of the gospel."

**Illustration:** Every generation has done this - some generations have been more faithful than others. But even in church history textbooks and textbooks of historical theology, you always find theologians and apologists. **Reason:** There is an "antithesis" against the truth in the world *at all times*. There is always a need for clear, Biblical, reasoned thinking.

**Application** - We must stand fast and firm with "one mind" and "one spirit" *as we strive "together" for the faith of the gospel*. We are members of the same team, each for the other.

## **2. Not Terrified by Adversaries - v28**

***[28] and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.***

**Point:** The verb used here that is translated "terrified" is unusual - this is the only occurrence of it in the NT. It means: "to let oneself be intimidated, be frightened, terrified..."

**Application:** If we really do believe the Bible is true, that Jesus is really every person's only hope, and if all of mankind are, by nature, radically opposed to the truth, to righteousness, and to God, **adversity will be out lot in life if we stand uncompromisingly upon these truths**.

**Application 2:** There is always a "truth war" in which Christians are called and enlisted by God to participate. Christians - all of you, of all ages, you have entered a war - against Satan, error, falsehood, lies, false teachers, and arguments in favor of what is falsely called "knowledge":

**2 Cor. 10:3-5** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. [4] For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, [5]

casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

**Ephes. 6:10-18** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. [14] Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [16] above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; [18] praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--

**Application 3:** If we think we have even an ounce of strength or resolve against sin, Satan, and the spiritual forces arrayed against us, *we have lost our minds*. If I arise in the morning and do not begin each and every day on my knees, that this day I would live my life for Jesus Christ, be a faithful worker, a faithful father, husband, mother, grandparent, spouse, brother, sister, daughter, son, pastor, or whatever else - *I have lost my mind*. You and I *without the armor of light upon us* are no match for what will come against us. And listen to this passage again - *this is what Paul is desirous to hear about them!*

**[28] and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.**

**Application 4:** The fact that you and I as Christian believers can have a calmness and confidence that is not shakable because of the One who is always with us is a token of damnation. "a proof of perdition" to any and all who oppose us.

**Illustration:** Athanasius, the great defender of the full deity of Jesus Christ - the man who stood at times almost entirely alone even as the rest of the church seemed to be giving into a view of the person of Jesus Christ that made Him less than fully God, had this to say in his great book defending the deity of Christ *On the Incarnation of the Word*:

A very strong proof of this destruction of death and its conquest by the cross is supplied by a present fact, namely this. All the disciples of Christ despise death; they take the offensive against it and, instead of fearing it, by the sign of the cross and by faith in Christ trample on it as on something dead. Before the divine sojourn of the Savior, even the holiest of men were afraid of death, and mourned the dead as those who perish. But now that the Saviour has raised His body, death is no longer terrible, but all those who believe in Christ tread it underfoot as nothing, preferring to die rather than to deny their faith in Christ, knowing full well that when they die they do not perish, but live indeed, and become incorruptible through the resurrection. ... Death has become like a tyrant who has been completely conquered by the legitimate monarch; bound hand and foot as he now is, the passers-by jeer at him, hitting him and abusing him, no longer afraid of his cruelty and rage, because of the king who conquered him. So has death been conquered and branded for what it is by the Saviour on the cross. It is bound hand and foot, all who are in Christ trample it as they pass and as witnesses to Him deride it, scoffing and saying, "O Death where is thy victory? O Grave, where is thy sting?"

**Illustration 2:** The martyrdom of Polycarp (AD 155), from *The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers, Vol 1*: Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;" Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"

And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar," he answered, "Since you are vainly urgent that I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretend not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and thou shalt hear them." The proconsul

replied, "Persuade the people." But Polycarp said, "To you I have thought it right to offer an account of my faith; for we are taught to give all due honour to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God. But as for these people in the crowd, I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me." The proconsul then said to him, "I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, if you do not repent." But he answered, "**Call them** then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; ..." But again the proconsul said to him, "I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent." But Polycarp said, "You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Bring forth what you wilt." While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, ... but, on the contrary, **the proconsul was astonished...**

[End: Not terrified by adversaries]

### **3. Willing to Suffer for Christ's Sake - v29-30**

**[29] For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, [30] having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.**

**Point:** Two things have been *granted* to us. The verb here: *charizomai* does not merely mean: "to give" or "to grant." It means: "to give **freely as a favor**, to give **graciously**": There are two gracious gifts:

- 1. To believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation**
- 2. To suffer for His sake**

**Illustration:** We have no parallel to this situation in our existence on earth - To receive something of infinite value which can never be lost, but to also receive suffering in this life *on account of that very gift*.

**Application:** Yet, it is suffering for the name of Jesus Christ and for His truth and righteousness that is to be counted as a great blessing and *honor*. When the apostles of Jesus Christ were commanded not to preach in His name and were beaten and then released, we read this in:

**Acts 5:41-42** So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. [42] And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

**Illustration:** Jim Elliot, the missionary martyr to the Alcas, said this: "*He is no fool* who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

**Final application:** If a report were given of us as a church, how would we fare in these three categories Paul gives here?:

- 1. United in Striving for the Gospel - v27; 2. Not Terrified by Adversaries - v28**
- 3. Willing to Suffer for Christ's Sake - v29-30**

**Jude 1:24-25** Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,[25] To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.